



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE MUSICAL TIMES, And Singing Class Circular.

SEPTEMBER 1st, 1859.

CHORAL PART-SONGS FOR MALE VOICES.

*Extracted from the preliminary pages of "Eighty-one Part-Songs and Choruses, in progressive order for the Cultivation of Part-Singing; with Instructions for forming and improving Male Choral Singers. By Nägeli and Pfeiffer. Translated from the German by SABILLA NOVELLO."**

(Concluded from page 94.)

CHAPTER IV.

On Artistic Style in Choral Singing.

THE director must next insist upon *correct* delivery: it often happens that when a chorus is formed from members belonging to a higher sphere of art, students or lovers of theatrical music, the director has to protest against many artificial modifications of strict rule, such as, for instance, the use of *portamento*,† which obscures the precise tones of properly-trained chorus-singers.

But if by "correct performance" we merely mean singing note for note, then "correctness" alone will not suffice for good part-singing. Extensive details and scientific explanations on this subject are given in the entire "Treatise on Cultivation of Singing," in the third part, which treats of style; in the second part, it is mentioned in connection with choral singing. In the present work, however, we must not omit the following directions to instructors, who are usually but little versed in this particular branch of art. The commencement of artistic delivery must spring from dynamic elements; this is the case with instrumental, and more especially with vocal music. The dynamic examples we have given (piano, forte, crescendo, &c.) are not all-sufficing: it is not enough to sing one passage piano, and another forte; neither will crescendos and decrescendos be sufficient;—the alternate increase and decrease of voice, necessitated even in speaking, by respiration, must be improved and regulated by declamatory or vocal art. The composition intended for vocal performance, if properly coinciding with the text, must be sung according to the text—that is, with artistic style.

Taking phrase by phrase, no several syllables in succession can have equal importance; therefore, the tones united to them should not possess equal dynamic weight. The most important should be distinguished from those of less consequence, and receive their relative preponderating accentuation, not only by length of duration or height (which depends on the composer), but by due inflection, attainable by practice. Intelligent singers often effect much by natural musical instinct; for no singing methods published until

now, have included dynamic proportion as an element of song, the writers being either ignorant of, or unable to clearly analyse its power.

In choral singing, it is necessary that all should strictly observe the same rules for style; therefore, these rules should be easy to understand and execute: such laws are the most difficult to frame, but all those given in this work will be of this kind.

Every chorus-director will be able immediately to perceive, and illustrate to his followers, the necessity and effectuality of each suggestion. Let him choose the first best vocal phrase, from some concerted piece, and cause all its notes to be sung with equal force; then let him merely *read* it, giving equal strength to all long, and equal softness to all short syllables; then let him cause it to be sung with this equal distribution: he may then declaim it, leaning in unequal proportion on the long syllables, according to their relative importance; he must then cause it to be sung in a similar manner, giving as a rule that every singer must give due weight of tone to each syllable and word; he will find that when cultivating even a very mixed assemblage, each member has, more or less, a perception of correct textual enunciation, and that their united efforts will very soon produce a satisfactory result.

The following points, more diffusely discussed in our larger Treatise, will do much towards forming good male singers.

When, in a single phrase, a long note is placed between shorter ones, the tone must generally be swelled out.

When a wide interval occurs on a word of many syllables, a good effect is produced, especially in the upper part, by a slur—which softens the melody; many exceptions to this rule exist (detailed in our Treatise), and it does not apply to wide intervals in fundamental (second bass) parts.

Liquid consonants—viz., l, r, m, n—may be leant upon with good result, sharply in Allegros, lengthily in Adagios. This temporary prolongation on liquids will cause short pauses in vocal tone, and these will enhance the charm of song by dynamic ebb and flood.

The natural limits of respiration, which unavoidably cause cessation of tone in solo singing, can be entirely concealed in the performance of choral music; which, by this uninterrupted flow of sound, possesses a perfection impossible in solos. A chorus gains a mysterious charm by this inexhaustible store of breath, and assumes a supernatural form, unsubjected to the human laws of respiration. In common chorus-singing, it often happens by chance, that a long or slow phrase is continuous in tone, on account of individual choristers taking breath at different places. This result may easily be obtained by artistic rule; it may be employed satisfactorily on long-held notes, viz., those bound through several bars; one set of singers may be directed to take breath after the second bar—another after the third, and so on. This means of embellishment

* Reprinted, by permission, from "Novello's Library for the diffusion of Musical Knowledge."

† Note by the Translator.—*Portamento* is the art of slurring heavily from one note to another; it is much used in operatic singing.

must not, of course, be resorted to in cases where successive tones (even when uninterrupted by rests) require to be divided by respiration, on account of punctuation in the text: such passages, on the contrary, demand simultaneous respiration from all the choristers; for a sprinkling of short silences, caused by taking breath, even though these be of semiquaver rest, or still less duration, are of æsthetic use in choral singing, as they detract from dull uniformity.

An essential part of the study of style, is the manner of contrasting different parts of a vocal composition, by lights and shades of delivery. The two following points we consider important:—1stly, with regard to parallel passages; when a phrase is succeeded by one perfectly similar, the second must be changed, and rendered more conspicuous by enunciation; this may be effected by increasing the strength of tone throughout the entire chorus, or by accentuating more pointedly the accented tones contained in the phrase. It is sometimes advisable to sing a repeated phrase *forte* the first time, and *piano* the second, when the text admits of a diminished sentiment (for further remarks, see Treatise). 2ndly—when a piece draws to its close, in all cases where a piano is not especially signified, the tones of the penultimate bar should be strengthened; but as cadences occur, not only as final conclusions, but many times during a long composition, and in the course of modulation from distant or relative keys, the choir-director who would correctly employ this rule for style must understand thorough-bass and harmony, in order to know what a cadence may be.

CHAPTER V.

On the Characteristics of a Male-Voice Chorus.

Without entering deeply into the psychological difference which exists between the sexes, and which acts influentially upon Art by the distinct effects produced by means of female and male voices, we shall, to a certain degree, discuss the natural laws by which male voices are uniformly lower than those of women. These natural laws induce especial artistic laws, which are not to be neglected.

These laws may be considered in three lights.

1stly—with reference to the human vocal instrument. The *highest* tones are produced more easily, and, when requisite, more rapidly in succession, even in chromatic passages, than the lowest.

2ndly—with reference to acoustics. The lowest tones of the human voice are fuller, more vigorous and weighty, than the highest, and therefore strike the ear more forcibly; the former possess more strength and endurance—the latter more agility and resonance.

3rdly—with reference to harmonization. The highest tones are capable of being added in great number to a smaller proportion of the lowest or distant notes, and even to a sustained fundamental tone; so that the former are better fitted

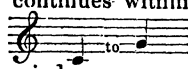
to flow on in predominating melody, while the latter, combined by harmony, form a progression of chords.

From the first consideration, it appears that compositions for male voices should not be florid, and should contain but few rapid progressions, or should, at any rate, be facilitated by the use of simple progressions.

The second consideration convinces us that all difficult and troublesome harmonies should be avoided; therefore, the two lowest parts should be kept apart as much as possible in divided harmony, in fifths and sixths, and also in fourths (in chords of the second or ninth), by which the harmony will be more easily perceived and comprehended.

The third consideration shews us that it is essential to harmonize the progression of the parts properly. The *succession* of chords is the principal point to be observed; the use of discords must not be excessive, as the bounded compass of tone will often make it necessary to write the intervals of the three upper parts in close harmony, which detracts from the comprehensibility of discords.

In speaking of the necessary limits of this branch of art, we do not wish to convey an impression that it is very limited; it is already extensive, and is capable of further extension by new composers.

We must now consider the essential qualities of the natural human organ. Male voices are distinguished as tenors and basses, but not only in difference of compass. Tenor voices, by natural softness and peculiar quality, approach *female* tones; this peculiar quality has great charm, and a wonderful attribute; the higher tones of a youthful tenor voice convey an illusive impression of being sung an octave above; thus the tenor supplies the characteristics of the treble part; on this account, the parts of a male-voice chorus appear to lie farther apart than they really do, and by this means it gains an æsthetic appearance of completeness; the absence of female voices is, to a certain degree, replaced, especially when the first tenor continues within the compass of higher tones,  during an entire piece or long period.

When we consider male singing with reference to *speech*, it presents itself to our minds in its full importance, which is, in a certain sense, greater than that of female singing. Men have, by nature, stronger power of enunciation; vowels combined with deep tones are more discernibly and acoustically distinct than when united to treble sounds; the higher the voice ascends, the more vowels become indistinct and difficult of correct enunciation, as a, e, i, o, u. From this it results, that so-called *declamatory* pieces, where words are of greater consequence than notes, should belong in preference to male voices.

The conclusions drawn from these natural laws

are very important in cultivating Art, for they prove that text becomes more emphatic in the mouths of men than in those of women, and that Poetry may be rendered more impressive by such interpretation.

We must here give a glance at Art-history, in order to ascertain how characteristic male-voice choirs were first formed, or, not to attempt too much, whence they assumed their first fundamental features.

Formerly, not only female singing, but female style in male-voice choruses, prevailed in undue proportion, both in composition and in execution; this may be attributed to the fact that cultivation in singing was first practised by Italians, whose climate and language induce a flowing rather than a declamatory style (see Treatise). This predominance is antagonistic to German nationality, and we partly throw off the yoke of a strange idol, when instituting male-voice choral meetings, which lead us back to real national song by a broad and easy path. German poets have felt this long, more deeply and truly than musicians, and have dedicated the fruits of their art to this worthy object. While Claudius, Schiller, Stollberg, and Voss, as early as the year 1780, published manly songs, which still rank as models of German poetry, musicians still generally contented themselves with the more effeminate, melodious solo compositions, as may be seen by the rich collection of Masonic songs, published in 1794, by Böheim, of Berlin; and when, at length, at the commencement of the next century, male-voice quartetts were introduced, the text chosen, instead of being one of the above manly, earnest poems, was generally some trifle or love sentences, which should always be set for one voice, being individual sentiments, ridiculous and meaningless even in a quartett, but perfectly nonsensical and disagreeable in a chorus. This especial art really originated in Salzburg, where Michael Haydn, in conjunction with the composer Hacker, was the first to compose a collection of these effeminately-sounding songs; most probably in order to oblige some elegant young gentleman.*

This art first spread in southern Germany, Vienna, and Munich, and at a later period principally by means of Call's publications: as southern Germany was the cradle of this new science, we can the less wonder at the bad selection of text and effeminacy of melody; for it is well known that, generally speaking, the composers of southern Germany do not understand the choice of their text, as well as north-German musicians; and also, if not equally acknowledged, yet equally certain, that those writers amongst them who are not complete masters of harmony and composition, seek to supply this want by Italian melodies, which individualise the voice, and in which the upper of many parts predominates unduly over

the rest (something like the first violin in a badly-written instrumental quartett): this was the case with the popular composer, Call, and many of his followers; but in latter years south-German composers—for instance, *Krufft*—have equalled the northern writers—for instance, the three several *Webers*—in their choice of text, and all deserve honor for what they have done to benefit this branch of Art during the critical years of struggling Germany.

With few exceptions, the better compositions of that period were calculated for a quartett of male voices, or four solo singers; no work, until the present one, contemplated a male-voice *chorus*, alternated with solo passages. We are therefore impelled to discuss more fully our in part newly-created style, which may be practised in the varied selection of music which follows.

In this work, we have paid more attention to strict rules of textual expression than is usually given by general writers; this we can demonstrate theoretically and critically. We are of opinion, and think necessary to inculcate upon all occasions, that in the interpretation of words is the principal scope of every song and vocal piece; this truth is especially applicable to the branch of Art now under discussion, as we have shewn that in it text holds an important rank. We have been careful to introduce several pieces of sweet and quiet character, in accordance with their text, and to alternate sustained and solid compositions, choruses in moderate and freely-moving tempo, and concerted pieces, æsthetically effective by their tendency towards feminine elegance. Manly power should be "strong in its weakness" occasionally, when the delivery of a pianissimo passage requires subjection of force.

In performing the following collection, all those members of a choral society who would improve their appreciation of textual beauty, should remark a principal difference which exists between concentrated and combined expression; the former is used in simpler vocal strophes, when *one* musical structure serves for several different verses,—the latter in motett-like compositions, when the same text often repeated and disjointed is sung to different musical passages. This branch of Art may be divided into two principal manners of expression, which may be termed *homophonic* and *polyphonic* articulation. We are compelled to fabricate nomenclatures, as the language of our Art is still poor and indefinite, and are less open to blame than Marpurge, who, fifty years ago, found it necessary to speak of "monologue-like and dialogue-like duets." To our first classification (homophonic), belong concerted songs; to the second (polyphonic), male-voice choruses, many of which might be termed "secular motetts." Pieces in which solo and chorus alternate are to a certain degree a medley of the two classifications. When the *same* text and music is repeated constantly as choral burden, it requires especial art, to cause some particularly significant word to stand out in full relief.

* With regret we blame this great and worthy church-composer, whose unusual destiny ordained that during his lifetime none of his vocal compositions were published, excepting this misconceived trifle, which gave an untrue impression of his talent to the world.

Choral song is a real and symbolical simultaneous expression of the people and popular sentiment,—therefore its character should always be grandiose; and grandeur—nay, even greatness—will unfailingly be represented by large masses of sound properly directed and intelligently combined with text: we strongly recommend large numbers in male-voice choruses, and, as artists, it is our most fervent wish that German men (in large towns, universities, &c.) should unite in the largest possible societies; and if, in any city, our choruses should consist of 400, instead of 40 singers, we may assure an increase of power beyond mere mathematical progression; for it is in the natural course of things, that when the voice of the people is heard thus ennobled, we shall fancy we hear the voice of an ennobled people, and hold all people capable of being ennobled.

[In the manufacturing towns of England, where large numbers congregate in mills, &c., the recommendations of Nägeli and Pfeiffer could be carried out with great facility, and a noble source of amusement and improvement would be opened to the working man. Cheerfulness and health are ever the result of Singing.—*ED. M. T.*]

CHAPTER VI.

On Vocal Pieces and their Use.

Those who would cultivate themselves for and by music, should, after having selected good compositions with appropriate words, seek to improve their effect by thorough study and proper delivery: a good practice for this, is prolonged exercise of separate vocal phrases; rudimental songs should therefore not be hurried over; such short compositions are beneficial precisely on account of their transient nature, as effect must be produced at once.

We think we do not hope too much when we say that the steady practice of the ensuing Selection, Nos. 1 to 30, will ensure to choral societies an ample supply of capable singers. The next step, to the Selections Nos. 31 to 81, containing solo and chorus pieces, will be a marked progress; *one* singer for easy solo passages will readily be found or formed; and thus members of choral societies may achieve the performance of works of art, as these concerted pieces contain a complete poem, in which individual and general sentiment appear æsthetically combined. When several compositions of this kind have been duly practised, the shorter part-songs may be undertaken: lastly, circumstances or taste may decide upon successive choice; something must be left to the individuality of each director or instructor. In rehearsal-meetings of male-voice choirs, of course the principal object will be choral-singing during reunion; but we must here make a remark, which is doubtless very unexpected:—It is never, and nowhere advisable to sing chorus consecutively for any length of time. We completely frustrate the grand object of improving the execution of

concerted music. The tonal masses of a chorus, especially when composed of male voices only, weary the ear and feelings, when long uninterrupted. On the same principle that a grand choral composition, interspersed with solo passages, is a far more important and effective work of art than a grand chorus without soli parts, it results that a grand musical institution in which solo-singing takes its relative place will prove a more important and effective aid to the cultivation of singing, than one in which it takes a subordinate or exceptional place. Choruses are much more impressive when the ear has been refreshed by solo-singing, and the feelings have had time to repose.

In our more extensive Treatise, we shall enlarge on this essential theme; but these hints will suffice for the object we propose in these papers. The pieces composed of alternate solo and chorus parts, contained in Selections Nos. 31 to 81, scarcely afford sufficient solos to employ a full singing lesson, or lengthened evening of amusement; but the *piano* pieces, and all those of tender expression (see part-songs 34, 35, 36, 39, 43, 47, and choruses 70, 72), may be sung by four solo voices as quartetts, between full choral pieces, or choruses without soli: but even quartett-singing does not furnish sufficient diversity to the ear and feelings, because chords are still heard in complete four-part harmony, as in full chorus. After this consideration, we propose that choral societies of male voices should often sing solo pieces between the full choruses contained in our selection; we recommend the choice of sterling poems, and warn against the usually wretched operatic texts. It is better to confine oneself to good songs for a single voice, or with some obligato instrument which may enliven by its fanciful beauty, and contrast effectively with choruses and quartetts.

If both a tenor and bass solo-singer be at the command of a male choral society, the average number of tenor solos should predominate; and in vocal institutions which possess both male and female voices, treble solos should be preferred, because (as we have shewn above) the flow of melody is wider and richer in high tones than in deep sounds, and therefore capable of more diversified effect.

In conclusion, we shall express the hope that these chapters may be beneficial to all true Germans, and help to form our German youths into men who shall carry into every-day life, refinement in Art, thus imbibed: may they propagate it widely, so that German song may become a clear, pure mirror, reflecting back elevated sentiments and noble aspirations.

[The publisher also expresses a hope that the present English edition will be the means of extending the effects of the authors' philanthropic wishes to all Britons, and to the readers of the English language throughout the world.]